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Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Framework for further actions and initiatives that might be considered during the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 52/100 and 52/231, decided to convene a special session to review and assess the progress achieved in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women[1] and the Beijing Platform for Action.[2] The review and appraisal of progress is being initiated at the present session of the Commission (see E/CN.6/1999/PC/3), in keeping with the Commission's multi-year work programme (Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6, sect. IV). The special session of the General Assembly and the preparations for it to be carried out by the Commission acting as the preparatory committee provide an opportunity for Governments and civil society to share and compare experiences, to renew old commitments and make new ones and to examine obstacles encountered as well as good practices.

2. In its resolution 53/120, the General Assembly referred to its earlier invitation to the Secretary-General to prepare a report on further actions and initiatives that might be considered during the review in order to achieve gender equality through attention to mainstreaming a gender perspective and to common trends and themes across the 12 critical areas of concern. The Secretary-General was requested to submit the report on this question to the Commission at its forty-third session.

3. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions 52/100, 52/231 and 53/120. In section II, it proposes a framework for identifying further actions and initiatives to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action in a manner that encompasses the 12 critical areas of concern. In section III, it presents four broad themes that cut across the 12 critical areas of concern and that have emerged as issues or become more pertinent since 1995. These issues require further attention by the international community, Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society, both now and in the coming century in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Section IV recommends that, at its present session, the Commission acting as the preparatory committee endorse a framework and themes for further actions and initiatives, with a view to their elaboration at the present session and at the forthcoming session.

4. The proposals also seek to respond to the General Assembly's interest, as expressed in paragraph 6 of its resolution 52/231, in the development of a vision for gender equality in the next millennium.

II. Proposed framework for further actions and initiatives

5. The Platform for Action contains strategic objectives and actions in 12 critical areas of concern for achieving gender equality. It was the product of a systematic process of discussion within and among Governments, international organizations and civil society. It builds on commitments made during the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976–1985, including at the Nairobi Conference, and on related commitments made in the cycle of United Nations global conferences held in the 1990s.

6. Agreed by 189 countries, the Platform is an "agenda for women's empowerment" (para. 1). It emphasizes that "women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world. It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognizes that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment" (para. 3).

7. Since its adoption, the Platform for Action has brought about renewed attention to women's rights as human rights and to a rights-based approach to gender equality. It has highlighted the gains to be realized by society as a whole from increased equality for women, including the importance of raising standards for women to ensure their well-being in order to promote the well-being of the family and consequently of the population as a whole. The Platform places the primary responsibility for implementation on Governments, but also contains recommendations for non-governmental organizations, political parties, the private sector, international development organizations and other institutions.

8. Underlying the Platform for Action is a life-cycle approach that calls for actions to address the needs of women from infancy to old age. Special attention is given in this context to the girl child, which is one of the critical areas of concern. The Platform also emphasizes the elimination of de facto discrimination given that in a number of countries *de jure* discrimination has been achieved in many spheres. It also holds States responsible for discrimination and other human rights violations even when they result from the actions of non-State actors, including individuals in the private sphere. The Platform also takes a major step beyond the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in its approach to reproductive rights and sexual and reproductive health, reflecting, *inter alia*, agreements reached at the 1995 International Conference on Population and Development.[3]

9. One of the most notable advances of the Platform for Action is the "mainstreaming approach" which appears throughout the document (see, for example, para. 38 of the Beijing Declaration[4] and paras. 57, 79, 105, 123, 141, 164, 189, 202, 229, 238, 252, 273 of the Platform for Action). This represents a commitment to using gender analysis in the development of all policies and programmes and a reaffirmation of the importance of integrating equality issues in all sectors of activity. The Platform also contains specific recommendations for helping women to catch up through targeted support and remedial actions by building skills and gaining access to a range of social and economic goods and services previously denied to them. It calls for action to ensure the eradication of gender discrimination, and for measures to achieve gender equality through institutional reform and fundamental changes in behaviour and attitudes.

10. Since 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women has been reviewing each of the 12 critical areas of concern. In doing so, the Commission has made recommendations on concrete measures and effective instruments of public policy and planning to implement the Platform for Action. It has also focused to some extent on more fundamental changes in institutions and in behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups. Moreover, there has been an emphasis on overcoming persistent obstacles and on intensifying efforts to use a more integrated, holistic approach to the achievement of gender equality given the importance of interrelationships between different critical areas of concern, such as the human rights of women and the eradication of poverty or women's and girls' education and health, including fertility reduction.

11. The conclusions and recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women on each of the 12 critical areas of concern offer additional concrete ways to accelerate implementation and as such also contain proposals for further actions and initiatives. The concluding comments/observations and general recommendations/comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of other human rights treaty bodies that provide guidance for full compliance with treaty obligations suggest further initiatives and actions to be taken by States parties to those treaties. The Commission has before it a report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the implementation of the Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1999/PC/4) as well as the report on integrating a gender perspective in the work of human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/1998/6) prepared for the 10th meeting of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. Other sources of ideas on further actions and initiatives include the national action plans/strategies prepared by Governments to implement the Platform for Action and submitted to the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1998/6 and E/CN.6/1999/2/Add.1), statements by Governments at the United Nations, national implementation/evaluation reports and reports of the expert group meetings on the critical areas of concern convened each year by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat.

12. Instead of designing further specific actions and initiatives under each of the critical areas of concern, the present framework recommends the application of a holistic approach to actions in functional categories. In other words, instead of detailing training strategies for public officials on gender issues under various critical areas of concern, an area where further action is clearly required, the focus would be on developing comprehensive human resource development strategies that are informed by gender considerations. This functional approach to actions also recognizes the interlinkages between the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action to achieve gender equality. For example, actions to create an enabling environment for women's education will have less impact in terms of achieving gender equality without a concomitant commitment to addressing discrimination in employment. Similarly, capacity-building for women's empowerment is linked across sectors, and progress in one area cannot be sustained without progress in others. Likewise, reproductive health can be more successfully promoted when women have greater control over resources that can facilitate choices in other spheres of life. Economic empowerment requires women to have a voice in shaping economic choices.

13. The proposed framework focuses on the more fundamental changes required to bring about lasting concrete results, through comprehensive and integrated strategies under functional categories of action. It emphasizes the need for structural and systemic changes in institutions, legal frameworks, resource allocations and attitudes to realize long-term benefits. Recognizing that the present generation of women and girls remains subject to discrimination and disadvantage, the framework also addresses the need for positive actions and remedial measures of support and empowerment. It also takes into consideration the importance of the full participation of all relevant actors. A major challenge is to reconcile these latter empowerment strategies to benefit victims of discrimination, with mainstreaming efforts that involve longer-term incremental and process-oriented change.

14. In this context, actions and initiatives to achieve gender equality in the 12 critical areas of concern may fall into essentially five functional categories or types of actions. The five functional categories proposed are:

- Actions aimed at demonstrating political will and commitment to creating an enabling environment to implement the Platform for Action;
- Actions aimed at capacity-building for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming;
- Actions to ensure accountability for implementing strategies and actions in the Platform for Action;
- Actions to establish cooperation and partnership for implementing the Platform for Action;
- Actions to support women and girls currently subject to discrimination and disadvantage.

15. Each of the 12 critical areas of concern contains examples of actions that fall into the five functional categories, albeit to different degrees. Actions in each category can be undertaken by a variety of actors, in the public and/or private sector, and at different levels of government. The framework recognizes that depending on progress achieved, some countries may need to place particular emphasis on some functional categories of action over others to achieve gender equality.

16. Once the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly has agreed on a framework for identifying further actions and initiatives, this framework may serve as the basis for further work by the Secretariat and for Member States to elaborate actions and initiatives to accelerate implementation at the Commission's preparatory session in 2000, for transmittal to the special session in June 2000.

A. Political will and commitment to creating an enabling environment for implementation of the Platform for Action

17. This category of action is focused on political will and commitment to an enabling environment for implementing the Platform for Action and achieving gender equality. The Platform for Action addresses the question of how to place gender equality high on the political agenda. It calls for Governments and international organizations, for example, to make policy statements and/or pledges with respect to gender-sensitive social and economic justice, gender mainstreaming, and gender balance in the public and private sectors; to support overall gender-sensitive resource allocation and concrete and measurable goals, benchmarks and/or targets in the 12 critical areas of concern, and to ratify international and regional treaties with a commitment to meeting legal obligations under these instruments.

18. Political will and commitment are necessary for achieving concrete results in implementing the Platform for Action. Since 1995, in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, Member States have reiterated their commitment to implementing the Platform for Action and achieving gender equality. Many Governments have prepared national action plans to implement the Platform and have made commitments subsequently at international forums dealing with related questions. For example, the decision of the international community in July 1998 to establish an International Criminal Court with the authority to address, *inter alia*, rape, sexual slavery and enforced prostitution as crimes against humanity and as war crimes is a recent example of such commitment.

19. Based on an analysis of actions proposed in the Platform for Action and in the agreements on the critical areas of concern put forward by the Commission on the Status of Women and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly since 1995, a number of types of actions and initiatives to achieve sustainable results in this functional category can be proposed:

- **Reduction and elimination of de facto discrimination.** Commitment to actions of this type requires an acknowledgment of the persistence of de facto discrimination, and a commitment to approaches that directly target de facto forms of discrimination. In addition to the political will to highlight situations of de facto discrimination, this would include appropriate positive measures such as affirmative action in the areas where de facto discrimination is most prevalent and pervasive;
- **Establishment of an enabling legal and regulatory framework.** Commitment to actions of this type includes legislative and regulatory review and reform to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men, and adequate remedies for discrimination. It also includes support for and ratification of international legal instruments for gender equality;
- **Commitment to policies targeted at women and girls.** Commitment to actions of this type would improve the life chances of women and girls throughout the life cycle, particularly the most disadvantaged or those facing particular barriers to achieving equality;
- **Establishment of gender-sensitive policy frameworks.** Commitment to actions of this type encompasses efforts to develop or adapt policy frameworks in such a way as to incorporate gender

equality goals. It requires actions to address existing disadvantages experienced by women and girls through all policy-making processes so as to redress, rather than perpetuate such disadvantages;

- **Equal participation of women at all levels and in all areas.** Commitment to actions of this type will include strategies to achieve gender balance in public and private institutions at all levels and to promote participatory and transparent governance.

B. Capacity-building for advancement of women and gender mainstreaming

20. Capacity-building is addressed in all critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. The Platform aims to provide actors responsible for the advancement of women with the tools, techniques, skills, knowledge, awareness and insights necessary to act in a manner conducive to achieving gender equality and mainstreaming gender. Capacity-building also includes dimensions of management, institutional development and networking.

21. The achievement of gender equality is the responsibility of society as a whole, since gender relations are determined by the socially constructed roles of women and men that are ascribed to them on the basis of their sex, in public and in private life. This goal is premised on the recognition that greater equality has individual as well as societal benefits. Development of capacity to act in pursuit of this goal, including through legal obligations, should empower people to act in accordance with the Platform for Action and a variety of agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

22. Capacity-building and competence development are multifaceted and ongoing processes. They require the development of tools and techniques to detect and recognize the gender dimensions of particular issues and to enable people to take these dimensions into account in their work, on the assumption that inequality, discrimination, disadvantage and bias encountered by women could be better dealt with if actors had the necessary tools and skills. In that sense, capacity-building for achieving gender equality cuts across all critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action.

23. Capacity-building has also been an important element of the Commission on the Status of Women's examination of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 1995, as a means of accelerating implementation. Moreover, many national action plans also propose steps to strengthen or build capacity for implementation.

24. Several types of actions can be identified under the functional category of capacity-building. They are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and could be the focus of further actions and initiatives:

- **Capacity-building specifically for women and girls.** Actions of this type include those that target women and girls. Both the Platform for Action and its follow-up by the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize the need to empower women and girls through building their capacity to pursue the strategic objectives identified in the 12 critical areas of concern and through increasing their life choices, their decision-making abilities, and their access to resources and services. This includes provision of information, education and training, and equal access to public goods and services;

- **Capacity-building for all actors responsible for achieving gender equality.** This type covers actions aimed at structural and systematic change at all policy- and decision-making levels to take into account equality considerations. These are essentially gender mainstreaming actions and include the development of knowledge, insights and skills to empower people to act in a more gender-sensitive and gender-informed way. These actions aim at empowering people to recognize gender inequalities, or factors that cause and perpetuate gender inequalities, and at providing the skills to take appropriate action in all sectors and at all levels. As such, they include training and staff development for public officials, curriculum change and research and data collection on the situation of women and men in various sectors;

- **Awareness-raising and changing of attitudes.** This type of action is addressed to individuals, specific groups and society at large. It aims at creating a climate that is supportive of gender equality and of the elimination of obstacles to its achievement, such as gender stereotypes, and of attitudes and practices that perpetuate women's inequality. It includes public information campaigns and advocacy, information dissemination through a variety of channels and support for gender-sensitive media activities;

- **Institutional dimensions of capacity-building.** This type of action addresses the institutional infrastructure that supports other capacity-building efforts. It covers the capacity of specialist institutions at the governmental and non-governmental levels (such as

national machineries for the advancement of women, women's non-governmental organizations, women and gender research institutions) and of mainstream institutions (such as cabinets, inter-ministerial committees, gender networks and task forces). It also covers the management dimension of capacity-building, including institutional change and knowledge management.

C. Accountability for and assessment of the implementation of the strategies and actions in the Platform for Action

25. Accountability in the context of the implementation of the Platform for Action entails assuming responsibility and being held responsible for achieving the goals of the advancement of women and gender equality. Implementation can be strengthened by monitoring the actions of those responsible for taking them.

26. Accountability can, or should, occur essentially at three different levels. At the level of intentions, accountability will cover plans for achieving the goals under various critical areas of concern; at the level of action, accountability will address what is actually being done; and at the level of impact, accountability will cover the results, or outcome, of actions "on the ground". At all three levels, accountability involves elements of process and of impact. Monitoring and reporting are critical at all three levels, requiring clarity as to whether the means used are, or might be, sufficient for achieving the intended outcome.

27. Accountability is not limited to any particular area, but can be applied to issues of political will, and to legislative, policy and programme work. It is multidimensional and is required from different actors. For example, Governments are, or should be, accountable to their citizens for the quality and scope of their plans to achieve gender equality. They may be asked to account for the types, timeliness and comprehensiveness of the actions taken to translate stated intentions into practice. They may also be asked to account for the impact, or outcome, of these actions, for example whether the number, or percentage, of girls in secondary schools has gone up as a result of more gender-sensitive curricula, better located schools with more safety provisions for girls, and a greater number of female teachers. Likewise, upon ratification of international human rights instruments, Governments become accountable to the international community for implementing the obligations arising from the instruments.

28. Accountability for implementing the Platform for Action is not confined to Governments. In different forms and at different levels, individuals, the private sector, institutions of civil society, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and transnational corporations may also be accountable for implementing the Platform.

29. The focus of the Platform is action and identifying those responsible for action. Limited attention is paid to measures of accountability, and methods by which those identified as responsible for action can be held to account for their responsibilities. Evidence suggests that such methods are still sorely lacking in many countries, or are underused. There are also instances where available methods could be used more systematically for purposes of strengthening accountability in the area of gender equality. For example, national human rights institutions may not formally be empowered to monitor the situation with regard to women's human rights. Also, government might formally report to parliament on a variety of sectoral areas, such as the social, environmental or employment areas, but there might not be a requirement for reporting on the situation of women, or little or no requirement or incentive to address the gender dimensions of those areas.

30. Accountability is an area where further consideration needs to be given to the types of methods, tools and instruments to be used to increase accountability at the level of plans, at the level of actions, and at the level of outcomes. The following tools could be used to develop better accountability methods:

- **Targets, benchmarks and a clear time-frame for implementation.** The degree of specificity of stated intentions and plans increases opportunities for measuring achievements. The Platform for Action contains several targets or benchmarks in some of the critical areas of concern. Additional targets, applicable at the national, regional and/or global levels, should therefore be developed;
- **Gender analysis.** The use of gender analysis needs to be a deliberate act in the design, implementation and evaluation of any law, policy or programme. Steps to ensure that knowledge about the implications for men and women of such activities is available and used need to be built into these processes. Thus, monitoring and reporting structures need to be established;
- **Gender-sensitive budgeting.** Efforts to ensure that women and men are equal beneficiaries of public resources, including through targeted programmes for women to remedy discrimination and disadvantage, are a responsibility of all public bodies. Thus, ways to

improve methodologies for gender-sensitive budgeting and their applicability in all budgeting processes need to be developed and widely used;

- **Gender impact assessments.** The impact of actions on women and men, in any given area, needs to be well understood before an action is taken, but should also be part of any evaluation and follow-up. Parameters for conducting such assessments should be developed;
- **Sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis.** The use of sound and reliable information on the situation of women and men is critical in any policy and programme process and in gender management, gender-sensitive budgeting and impact assessments. The collection and use of such data and information needs to be further improved;
- **Performance appraisal.** Achievement of gender equality goals should be part of the performance appraisal of all actors (institutional and individual) and incentive or disincentive systems for performance should be developed;
- **Reporting.** Formal accounting for actions is part of any accountability method. Existing reporting structures could be improved or new reporting could be proposed to increase accountability at all levels;
- **Gender-sensitive regulations, procedures or guidelines.** The use of prescriptions for action can be improved in various sectors. They could range from voluntary codes of behaviour or conduct to mandatory administrative instructions. Reporting on their use, including impact, to pre-established bodies would be necessary to ensure their use.

D. Cooperation and partnership for implementing the Platform for Action

31. The Platform for Action emphasizes cooperation and partnership in all the critical areas of concern. The creation of an environment in which effective local, national and international alliances can be forged to advocate for and contribute to changes required to achieve the Platform's strategic objectives is seen as fundamental to implementation.

32. The ability of Governments to identify and implement policies that promote gender equality is enhanced by the active participation of other players, including from the development cooperation community and civil society. These include women and men, community-based groups, private firms, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and multilateral and bilateral agencies. Interaction between public institutions and other actors provides the basis for a more informed policy dialogue on gender issues. It also lays the foundation for operational collaboration and for broadly based support for public policy measures.

33. This functional category encompasses various kinds of action and initiatives for cooperation and partnership, for example, among Governments, including North-South donors and recipients and among countries of the South; between Governments and non-governmental organizations; between public and private actors; and between diverse groups and individuals in society, including men and women and boys and girls.

34. Among the types of actions needed in this functional category to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action are:

- **Cooperation between the public and private sectors.** This type of action includes cooperation and partnership among Governments, non-governmental organizations, labour unions, political parties, employers organizations and cooperatives with a view to active participation by women in policy dialogues and decision-making;
- **International cooperation and solidarity.** This includes, for example, increased support from multilateral and bilateral development cooperation agencies to developing countries for efforts to advance the status of women, achieve gender equality and mainstream gender, as well as action to ensure that global macroeconomic policies are designed with a view to their impact at the micro-level, including their gender impact. It also includes solidarity among Governments from the North and South;
- **South-South cooperation.** This includes efforts to share successful practices, including networking, on a range of issues of mutual interest such as appropriate technologies, leadership strategies and gender impacts of economic policies;
- **Partnerships with and among women's organizations.** This type of action includes cooperation with women's organizations in advocacy and implementation at all levels by Governments and other actors. It also includes support for alliances among women including, for example, collectives and other organizational approaches that enable women to join forces to better access information, knowledge, skills and to process, sift, connect, synthesize, apply

and strategically use information and skill for their own empowerment;

- **Partnerships between men and women.** This type of action includes cooperation in activities related to child health and fertility regulation, harmonization of work and family responsibilities, and greater involvement of women in conflict-resolution, peace-building, reconstruction and humanitarian assistance;
- **Fostering respect between boys and girls.** This includes cooperation and partnership, in particular during adolescence, to eliminate sexual harassment and build mutual respect and self-esteem.

E. Assistance to women and girls currently subject to discrimination and disadvantage

35. The Platform for Action and its follow-up by intergovernmental bodies at the United Nations as well as by Governments emphasize programmes and projects to overcome prevailing forms of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by women and girls. Non-discrimination activities and remedial efforts to assist the victims of gender discrimination are well established in the work of Governments and other actors, especially non-governmental organizations. Less attention has been paid to the types of action mentioned above to address more fundamental and long-term changes in institutions and practices.

36. Actions and initiatives in this functional category are immediate and short-term in nature. As such they may overlap to some degree with those in the above four categories to the extent that these actions and initiatives target women and girls as a key aspect of the actions to be taken or in cases where targeted actions focus on capacity-building, ensuring accountability and so forth.

37. Identification of actions and initiatives in this functional category will be particularly facilitated by the review and appraisal of implementation of the Platform for Action. The review is expected to contribute information on good practices and lessons learned.

38. Further actions and initiatives in this functional category should focus, for example, on:

- **Programmes for girls in need of special protection.** This type of action encompasses a number of groups in need of special protection. It may, for example, include girls with disabilities; those in armed conflict, including combatants and displaced persons; orphaned girls; girls in conflict with the law; sexually abused girls; girls subject to female genital mutilation or suffering from fistula; girls obliged to marry young; girls affected by dowry or "bride price" systems; girls abducted by men, including soldiers, for marriage or sexual exploitation; girls used as subjects of child pornography, which may cause them lasting damage; girls working under hazardous and exploitative conditions; and migrant girls who cross international borders. Measures are needed for both prevention and special protection. For example, participatory approaches to the design of programmes and projects to address needs, as well as recovery and rehabilitation programmes are needed;
- **Emergency assistance for victims of gender-based violence, including in situations of armed conflict.** This type of action requires focus on sensitization and sanctions for the perpetrators of gender-based violence and to break the silence that often surrounds such acts of violence; targeting of programmes for victims to protect against immediate risks; basic services for survival and protection against economic and social destabilization; health services, particularly treatment in the aftermath of violent attack; and accessible legal and social services. Assistance for women combatants is also needed;
- **Assistance to victims of specific forms of gender discrimination and disadvantage, including economic forms of disadvantage.** This type of action includes interventions that protect women and girls who are not covered by traditional forms of social protection like pensions, social security or protection by the extended family system. Target groups may include widows, self-employed and informal sector workers, or divorced women. It also includes actions focused on women and girls whose basis for survival is threatened, or who have lost the means for survival, with the purpose of providing immediate redress, and transitional assistance towards more secure forms of economic activity. Actions would include remedies for occupational hazards and assistance for those deprived of their livelihoods by environmental disasters or degradation, or who lose access to land, water, shelter, adequate nutrition and food, or self-employment opportunities in on-farm and off-farm activities.

III. Proposed cross-cutting themes for further actions and initiatives

39. Since the Beijing Conference in 1995, a number of themes have figured widely in the statements by Governments at the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the action plans of Governments, regional meetings, meetings of non-governmental organizations and research as emerging issues requiring attention. While several themes cut across a number of critical areas of concern, their full implications for the advancement of women and gender equality are not yet fully understood and thus require further analysis, as well as specific proposals for action. Four such themes are discussed in the present report. If endorsed, these themes could be further developed and considered by the Commission on the Status of Women, including in a multiyear work programme for 2001–2005. Together with further actions and initiatives in the five functional categories, actions on these four cross-cutting themes are expected to facilitate accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the realization of the goal of gender equality and may serve as a thematic framework for developing further actions and initiatives.

40. Because of the interest these themes have attracted, several may also figure in the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, to be held in 2000, as well as in other five-year reviews, such as those for the World Summit for Social Development and the International Conference on Population and Development. The special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", which will take place before the Millennium Assembly, offers an opportunity to call for a gender perspective to be taken on these issues and to highlight for further exploration their different dimensions — at the macro (policy), meso (institutional) and micro (individuals and markets) levels.

41. These proposals respond to the General Assembly's interest, as expressed in its resolution 52/231, in the development of a vision for gender equality in the next millennium. In reaffirming the commitment to the Platform for Action, they will contribute to the outlook beyond 2000, and to overcoming obstacles to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Nairobi and Beijing Conferences.

42. The four broad issues are (i) globalization and the economic empowerment of women, especially poor women; (ii) women, science and technology and the new information age; (iii) women's leadership; and (iv) human security and social protection.

A. Globalization and the economic empowerment of women, especially poor women

43. The issue of globalization, including its employment effects and other economic implications, is a major recent trend in the world economy and represents a movement towards a globally integrated economy. In all parts of the world, the economic environment within which businesses, Governments and individuals make decisions increasingly includes the international dimension. In terms of its economic aspect, the term usually covers the closely related but distinct macroeconomic concepts of openness or liberalization, integration and interdependence. It entails a movement towards a world economy characterized by free trade, free mobility of capital and rapid dissemination of products, technologies, information and consumption patterns. It has also contributed to increased international migration of workers, including a large number of women workers.

44. Much of the controversy about globalization stems not from disagreement about the objective of the changes under way, but about their social, political and economic impact. The gender impact of globalization and of macroeconomic policies more generally have also been getting increased attention. While some are persuaded of the generally progressive nature of globalization, others see the potential benefits dwarfed by harmful effects and thus give greater weight to the risks entailed.

45. The Platform for Action calls for a gender perspective in the formulation of policies on macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt, taxation, employment, poverty reduction and labour market liberalization and, more broadly, development strategies that take into account the impact of macroeconomic policy choices on women and girls. The Platform also calls for commitment to recognizing women's contribution to development and to promoting women's empowerment through protection of their economic rights and independence; access to resources, employment and markets; and elimination of occupational segregation and employment discrimination (critical areas of concern A and F). These recommendations are highly relevant in the broad context of globalization and need to be further examined in that context.

46. Research carried out during the past decade, including by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and other United Nations entities, for the 1994 and 1999 editions of the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, explores the gender impact of economic

integration, taking into account differences in women's and men's participation in the economy and the household. It has been argued that the use of a gender perspective in economic and poverty analysis is necessary to shape equitable policies that reduce women's vulnerability to poverty and unemployment and to address constraints faced by poor women and employed women under conditions of market liberalization.

47. Initial findings of the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, for which an executive summary is before the Commission at its present session (E/CN.6/1999/CRP.3), suggest that globalization, as an intensification of market-driven activity, does not generally relieve or overturn the gender-based discriminatory practices that have characterized different stages of economic development. Nor does it in general tend to minimize gender inequalities — it may even exacerbate them in some circumstances.

48. In terms of gender-differentiated employment effects of trade, economic integration has been strongly associated with the increased employment of women in the paid, non-agricultural labour force in developing countries since the mid-1970s, chiefly in the export sector. The main features of this situation were identified in the *1994 Survey*. New empirical evidence has confirmed these employment effects and allowed them to be seen in a broader perspective. There have also been other developments. The shift of terminology from "international integration" to "globalization" is indicative of how fast the world economy has been changing. While trade has continued to be of ever increasing importance in total output, there has been exponential growth of private capital inflows, both financial portfolio investment and foreign direct investment, into developing countries in the 1990s. These flows have not only facilitated the global reorganization of corporate activity, but also conditioned the limits within which Governments could conduct macroeconomic policy.

49. In most developing countries, market relations have been expanding in agriculture with diverse gender effects on subsistence production, modernization, food security and household survival strategies. Poor women have been among those affected. In many countries, the drive towards privatization of natural resources, concomitant with market expansion, is also having gender and class differentiated effects. Although land markets are in theory open to everyone, poor rural people, especially poor women, are unable to take advantage of the market system because they lack information about new laws and programmes, land and access to credit. Women are particularly disadvantaged because of the male biases in property relations, inheritance laws and access to legal systems.

50. Barriers to increased productivity and income of women due to restricted access to resources such as land, credit and extension services, particularly under conditions of structural adjustment and market liberalization, need to be addressed. Economic restructuring has reduced core public expenditures essential for fostering gender equality in social service provision, agricultural support and infrastructure services. In many countries this has meant, for example, further limiting women's already limited access to productive resources (related to land, property and financial services), particularly in developing countries.

51. At the same time, globalization, particularly trade liberalization and foreign direct investment, have increased employment opportunities for female workers where manufacturing has been oriented towards exports. A rapidly expanding international financial services sector also appears to employ a high proportion of women. Other business services such as software design, computer programming and financial services (banking and insurance), which are increasingly being relocated to developing countries, also employ relatively high proportions of women in the workforce, even at higher grades. And, while there is not sufficient consolidated data on employment in the services sector, it is clear that in some countries new forms of services provide relatively well paid jobs for women. Further actions and initiatives are needed to ensure that such gains are sustainable and further extended to higher skilled and better-paid jobs.

52. The gender impact of globalization is complex, the effects are mixed and the question should be further examined with a view to identifying actions and initiatives for increasing positive gender impacts of this worldwide trend, especially for the poorest women.

B. Women, science and technology and the new information age

53. The Platform for Action calls attention to the potential of science and technology, including new information and communication technologies (ICTs), to contribute positively to women's advancement (critical areas of concern A, B, F and L). It calls for women to be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology and to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact. The Platform also calls for

increasing the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies by encouraging the use of communications systems, including new technologies, as a means of strengthening women's participation in democratic processes (critical area of concern J). Further actions and initiatives are needed by the telecommunications industry, the international community and Governments to implement these recommendations.

54. One of the great divides in the world today — between poor and rich — is that poor countries and poor people not only lack capital but lack the knowledge and information required to move out of poverty. The World Bank in its *World Development Report* for 1998/99 looked at development from the perspective of knowledge. It identified two types of problems that are critical for developing countries, that is, knowledge about technology and knowledge about attributes. Efforts by countries to narrow knowledge gaps that hurt overall efforts at development need to be gender sensitive so as not to leave women and girls behind.

55. In the past 30 years, developing countries have made enormous strides in expanding enrolments at all levels, particularly in primary schools, but the main beneficiaries are still boys, particularly in the field of science and technology. New communication technologies promise to reduce isolation and open access to knowledge in ways unimaginable not long ago. Countries can leapfrog to these new technologies, largely skipping such intermediate steps as copper wires and analog telephones. But access to even basic communications technology is still very limited and costs are high. Women have often been seen as a source of traditional knowledge for which there was a high demand, but modern life's disruption of traditional communities is dissipating informal channels of information exchange and knowledge is flowing to those who are already privileged in other ways.

56. The poor stand to gain from development strategies that aim to mitigate information failures and help them to use science and technology, knowledge and information to become agents of change. Concerns that priority should be given to basic sustainable needs such as food and shelter rather than tools like the Internet and other technologies have been countered by arguments that meeting basic needs and accessing electronic networks and other technologies are not mutually exclusive.

57. Evidence suggests that barriers continue to confront girls and women who seek training in science and technology in many parts of the world. Women are also underrepresented in careers in science and technology.

58. At the same time, women have been slow to enter ICT-based professions and have been largely excluded from the design and shaping of information technologies, in both North and South. Where women are employed in this sector, it tends to be in the low-paying and less prestigious positions, including assembly work, particularly in developing countries.

59. While barriers also exist to women taking full advantage of the new information technologies, and data remains scarce on this, one recent survey shows that a growing number of women worldwide use both e-mail and the Web for information and communications. They also re-package information for groups without access to computers and the electronic media. An Ecuadorian based organization, Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, promotes the use of electronic networks among mainly rural, indigenous and women's organizations. It promotes women's access to ICTs and encourages critical and strategic use of these resources. It supports this effort through gender-sensitive training programmes encouraging and enabling women to become involved in decision-making.

60. Women need to influence the development of science and technology and be actively involved in the definition and development of the new information technologies in order to create a space that is conducive to the discussion of their concerns, and represents their perspectives and abilities in a non-threatening and non-stereotypical manner. This is important to keep modern science and the information revolution from bypassing women or exerting harmful effects on their lives. With respect to the latter, incidents of negative stereotyping, discrimination against women and sexual harassment are already evident online. In June 1998, the World Telecommunications Development Conference (Malta) urged the international community and Governments to ensure women's greater participation in policy- and decision-making, and access to telecommunications services and infrastructure to enable women and other groups who have been traditionally disadvantaged to derive benefits and make more effective contributions.

61. Science and technology, including ICTs, offer the potential for women to access information and knowledge, gain training and expand business opportunities and networks. For example, changes in communication technology have led to new entrepreneurial activities among women in some developing countries. In Accra, Ghana, for example, there has been a growth of business centres that offer services such as fax and e-mail. The owners of these

centres are women and often the clients are women as well. In Latin America, the number of women Internet users grew by over 700 per cent between 1995 and 1997. Information-sharing and networking via the Internet are important empowerment tools. Moreover, the decentralized, interactive and non-hierarchical nature of the new technologies may offer space for women to express their views and to benefit from interaction with women and men around the world.

62. Further actions and initiatives need to be explored and implemented to ensure that women and girls have equal opportunities in science and technology and equitable and affordable access to new technologies, as well as training in their use and application.

C. Women's leadership

63. The Platform for Action calls for greater participation of women in decision-making and in leadership positions. Not only does it devote one critical area of concern to women and decision-making (critical area G), the Platform calls for women's leadership in most of the critical areas of concern.

64. Women's leadership, politically and economically, has not kept pace with their entry into the workforce nor with their acquisition of voting rights. While democracy and the full participation of citizens are more prevalent than ever before, this has not been fully reflected in women's advancement into positions of leadership. To the extent that women have entered top level leadership positions, this has been a recent development. Sixteen women have become presidents or prime ministers in the 1990s compared with only three in the 1960s and four in the 1980s.

65. In the private sector, few women have headed major corporations and in many other areas, such as in education and health, women's leadership has also been slow to evolve. Many institutions are being presented with new challenges to their survival as a result of the economic and technological changes of the 1980s and the organizational changes of the 1990s and are finding that command-and-control styles of leadership are not meeting their needs. Some are beginning to adopt new organizational structures based on cooperative relationships, and developing individuals' capacities in an empowered way, instead of retaining hierarchical structures. The extent to which expanding the principle of participation encourages greater inclusion of women in decision-making needs to be explored.

66. Since the Beijing Conference, considerable attention has been given to the question of women's leadership, and there have been a number of efforts worldwide to conduct leadership training for women and to discuss both obstacles to more women assuming leadership positions in politics and to the potential transformatory implications of having more women in leadership positions. Further actions and initiatives are needed to accelerate women's entry into such positions. Moreover, further analysis is needed to determine the impact, if any, of what some have agreed is the particular style and agenda which women leaders bring to leadership.

67. With regard to women's leadership in international institutions, few of these institutions have achieved a significant increase in the numbers of women professionals, particularly in senior positions, despite increased attention to this aspect. Further concerted actions and initiatives are required in order to increase the number of women in top positions and as special representatives in the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international and regional multilateral institutions and to encourage new styles of leadership that will serve the needs of society in the new century.

68. The vision for the next millennium must have as an important component increased participation of women in government, the private sector and civil society, including in such areas as conflict-resolution and peacekeeping, if leadership is to be truly reflective of society as a whole. Actions and initiatives are needed to open up the paths to power to women worldwide. Leadership in the twenty-first century, whether economic, political or cultural, must be inclusive in ways unheard of in the twentieth or prior centuries if countries are to provide a high quality of life for all their citizens and to keep pace with rapidly changing economic, social and political demands.

D. Human security and social protection

69. In recent years, questions of human security have received growing attention from Governments and intergovernmental forums. In 1992, the Secretary-General considered the issue of security in the post-cold-war era and in "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277–S/24111) addressed the interrelated concepts of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. In the 1995 "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace" (A/50/60–S/1995/1), these concepts were further examined in the light of ethnic and nationalist conflicts that had erupted, as well as the questions of sanctions and disarmament. Although the security dimensions of poverty, environmental degradation, violations of human rights,

including racial discrimination, and economic tensions were recognized, security remained primarily understood as security of the State from foreign intervention or other types of armed conflict. Neither "An Agenda for Peace" nor the supplement thereto gave separate consideration to threats to women's security.

70. Human security evolved from this traditional concept that placed the State at the centre of concern, to placing the human person at the centre of concern. Human security is understood in a broader way that encompasses a state of well-being in which an individual or group has the assurance of protection from physical and mental harm, freedom from fear and anxiety, and freedom from want and is able to live life with dignity. Human security is thus firmly based in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women's enjoyment of their human rights provides the framework and basis for further analysis and action.

71. Women face threats that go well beyond situations of personally experienced infractions on their physical, emotional and material well-being. Human security entails an understanding that threats to women's physical emotional and material well-being are threats to society as a whole, as well as to women everywhere. It is therefore in the interest of all to address such threats in a concerted and systematic way to reduce, eliminate and ultimately prevent their recurrence. Consequently, addressing issues of women's human security involves considerations beyond solidarity or social justice, and encompasses an understanding of shared interest.

72. The Platform for Action contains certain aspects of many of the constituent elements of women's human security. Issues of security in situations of armed and other kinds of conflict, security from violence or from environmental depletion and catastrophe are raised (critical areas of concern C, D, E, I and K). Issues of food security, shelter and housing are also touched upon. So far, however, no comprehensive examination and analysis of women's human security has been undertaken. Without a better understanding of the concept and its local, national and global dimensions, as well as its links to other emerging issues and to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform, actions and initiatives for improving women's human security in a comprehensive and holistic manner will remain insufficient.

73. Women, individually and as a group, continue to face gender-specific threats to their physical well-being. While many forms of violence against women in the family, in the community and when perpetrated or condoned by the State continue to receive sustained attention, there are new aspects that need to be addressed and incorporated into existing legislation, policies and programmes. Economic pressure on families and a lower value given to girls in some societies are not only among the root causes for women's and girls' lower levels of education and health, but are also the cause of various forms of sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, son preference, prenatal sex selection and female infanticide and the sale of girls. Trafficking in women and children is taking on new dimensions in an age of rapid technological development, open borders, economic liberalization and globalization.

74. With the ageing of populations, intergenerational conflicts are arising over the growing needs of the elderly. Traditional family-oriented care systems are under pressure in many societies due to internal and external migration and change in employment patterns, particularly for women. Elder abuse, especially of older women, is growing as a consequence of lack of women's financial security in old age and of women's lack of support systems that might be available to older men. Women's longer life span also raises a number of care-related challenges, with older women requiring care themselves, and younger women having caring responsibilities for both the older and the younger generation, often in situations of financial insecurity.

75. The issue of women's migration poses new challenges from the perspective of human security, as it involves aspects of women's economic rights and security, physical well-being, including violence and threats of sexual exploitation, environmental pressures, as well as protection of civil and political rights. With growing numbers of women migrating from rural to urban areas, within and between regions, and at different times in their life cycle, women's human security and their social protection raise some of the most difficult challenges that need to be addressed on an urgent basis.

76. Lack of human security of women in situations of armed conflict, in humanitarian emergencies, and in transitions from conflict to rehabilitation and development of societies is a major concern. Gender-based persecution in armed conflict remains widespread, and persists, in different forms, in the reconstruction of society. In situations of humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict, environmental disaster, or by political or economic factors, attention to women's human security, including their physical well-being and protection of their human rights, is often neglected.

77. Freedom from want is a critical dimension of human security. Over the past several years, a consensus has emerged that poverty, especially situations of extreme

poverty, inhibit the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and have to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. Women's socio-economic disadvantages are reflected in many indicators, and causes include the denial of equal rights to women in access to resources, opportunities, and goods and services. Many economic and social aspects of women's human security are well developed, but issues such as women's food security and security of shelter or housing require further analysis, including their intersection with other rights. Women are particularly threatened by loss of shelter and/or evictions, by the continuing existence of statutory and other forms of discrimination, including in relation to property and ownership rights and limitation of women's rights within marriage and upon its dissolution, as well as by sexual and other forms of violence.

78. Women's food and nutrition security is a further critical element of human security. Similar to security of shelter and housing, gender-based discrimination and disadvantage shape women's food and nutrition security. A greater understanding of women's access to food, and the causalities of women's hunger and malnutrition is required. The consequences of environmental factors, economic interests and control over resources, including land, water and property, are all shaped by gender-based role patterns and opportunities. In this regard, a broader understanding of nutrition, encompassing food, but also health behaviour and services, and the role of care, needs to be developed. The latter applies in particular to pregnant and lactating mothers, young girls and elderly women.

79. Social protection for women and girls constitutes an important aspect in the framework of the protection and promotion of women's human rights in the areas outlined above. Thus, further consideration needs to be given to the regulatory role of the State at a time when various functions previously considered to be the exclusive domain of the State are being privatized, and certain regulatory functions devolve upon other entities. Likewise, deregulation of a range of activities, and lack of or insufficient regulation in others, can have a disproportionate negative impact on women and girls and pose additional threats to their human security, rather than alleviating existing ones. Finally, women's human security concerns need to be assessed in a framework that clarifies further the State's obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights to food, shelter, freedom from violence and persecution and so forth.

80. Further progress in understanding and enhancing women's human security stands to have a major impact on the implementation of the Platform for Action as a whole. It is also suggested that further work on women's human security will strengthen links with follow-up to other conferences and summits, including the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and the Millennium Assembly.

IV. Recommendations

81. The present report, in section II, proposes a framework for identifying further actions and initiatives for achieving the goal of gender equality and identifies five functional categories for their elaboration. The Commission acting as the preparatory committee, at its present session, may wish to endorse this framework, and provide further guidance on the sub-categories for actions proposed under each functional category.

82. The present report, in section III, proposes four cross-cutting themes whose importance has emerged more clearly since 1995 and that require further analysis in terms of their impact on the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality. The Commission acting as the preparatory committee, at its present session, may wish to endorse these themes as the basis for the development of the outlook beyond 2000, and a vision for gender equality in the next millennium, and provide further guidance on the format and approach to be taken under each theme.

83. The Commission may wish to request the Secretary-General to proceed with the preparation of proposals for further actions and initiatives under each functional category, taking into consideration views and examples provided at the present session, as well as relevant information collected in the review and appraisal process. It may also wish to request the Secretary-General to proceed with the elaboration of a more detailed analysis of the various components of the cross-cutting themes and to provide suggestions for relevant actions and initiatives, taking into consideration the links with the Platform for Action. In this regard, account would be taken of the views and examples provided at the present session, as well as relevant information collected in the review and appraisal process.

84. The Commission may wish to request the Secretary-General to submit his proposals in a report to the Commission acting as the preparatory committee at its third session as the basis for further discussion and for submission to the General Assembly at its special session.

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] See *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18).

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ...*, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.